

# “CENTRAL”

BY G. R. TYLER. PART I

*Sing a song of Central . . .*

It isn't our habit to shoot a line—  
To yap of the things we do.  
For the bobbery jobs that Central does  
We want no ballyhoo.  
But, since the Editor says we must,  
We're ready to have a go . . .  
The fact of the matter is simply this—  
We're the Chaps Who Really Know.

ASK ANY CASUAL acquaintance in a New Street corridor what Central Division does, and ten to one (provided he's not a Centralian) he'll look a shade disconcerted and murmur “Valves” before beetling on to his own possibly more glamorous sector of the hive. “Valves”—as if that were all, and not—in some mysterious way—altogether delicate at that! Well . . . !

*In Marine Test. After construction in the Works, display units for the Radiolocator IV are being tested by E. Willoughby . . .*



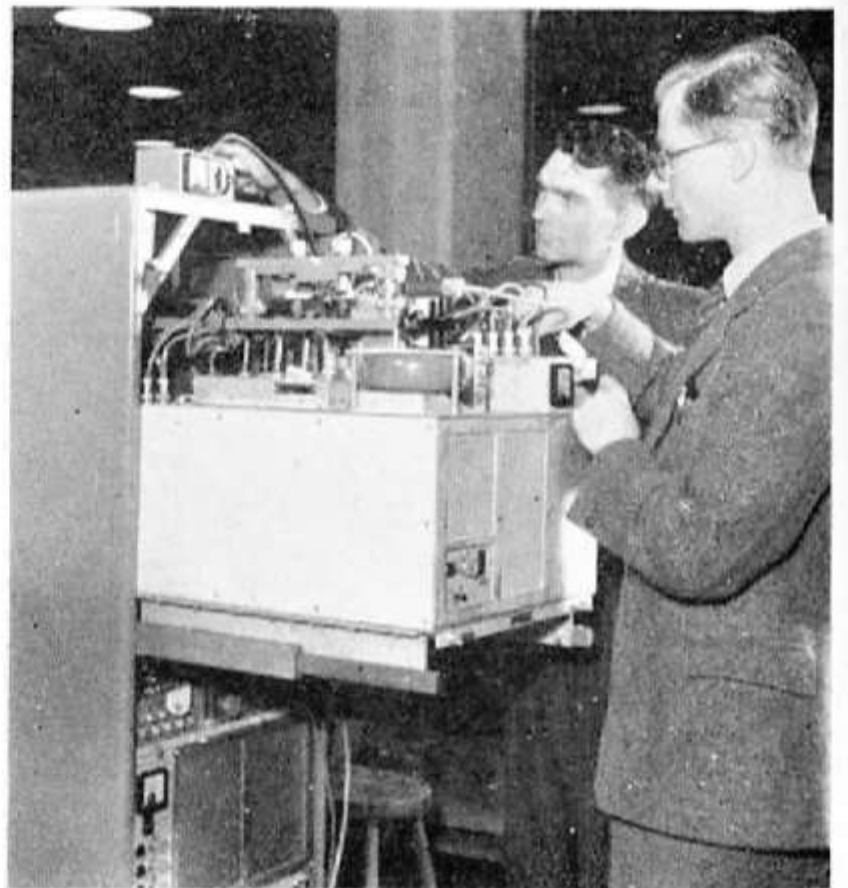
We're orthicon tubes and stabilovolts  
And various valves between.  
We peddle equip. to Trinity House,  
And the Internat. Marine.  
We're crystals, navies and—Marconite,  
We're masts and the I.D.O.,  
Plus anything nobody else can do,  
For we are the Chaps Who Know.

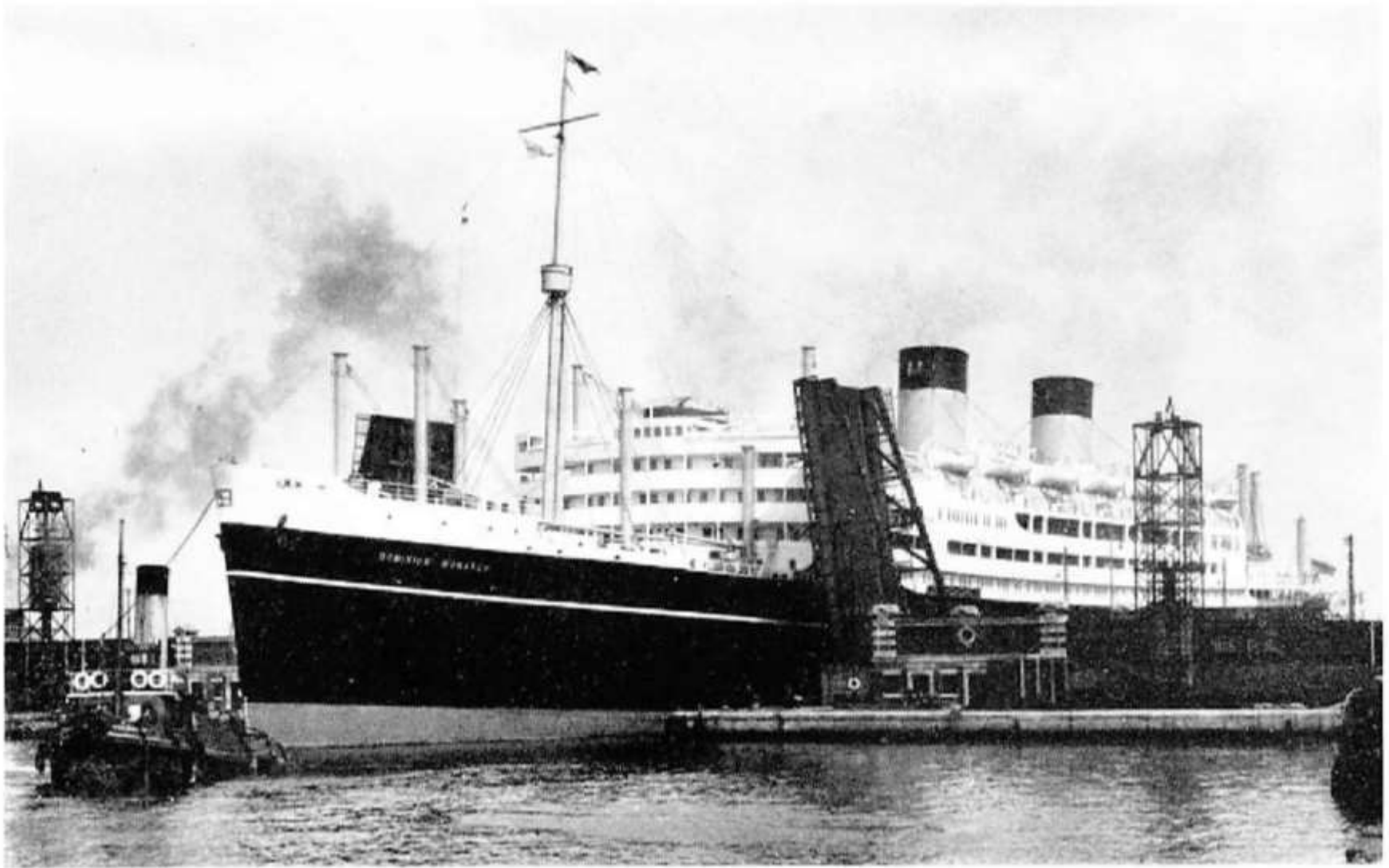
ANON.

Of course, Central does do valves. Moreover, valves and kindred products are a very important part indeed of Central's activities. But they are not, from Central's point of view, all-important. Valves occupy a section of Central.

To make things clear at the start, let's summarise under broad headings what we do:

*. . . and a transmitter unit for the same ship's navigating equipment is put through its paces by R. Sherwin, left, and N. Evans*





*The 29,000 ton liner Dominion Monarch leaving George V Dock, London. She has Marconi Marine main and emergency transmitters, receiver, Radiolocator IV radar, D/F equipment, and auto alarm. A very close look will reveal her D/F aerial and radar scanner above the bridge*

*"Picture Post" Library*

1. Masts, supply, erection and maintenance of. . . .
2. Marine. The sale and fitting of wireless equipment in warships, the sale of all equipment to the M.I.M.C. Co., the sale and supply of radio-beacon equipment for lighthouses and lightships and all shore-based navigational aids.
3. Management of the Installation Drawing Office.
4. Purchase and supply of all valves and kindred products for M.W.T. consumption—sale and hire of valves, etc., to consumers all over the world.
5. Sale of Hackbridge crystals.
6. "Odds and ends" such as Marconite varnish, cables, and so on.

Even laid out like that, it makes in our opinion an impressive if rather "mongrel" display. This, we feel, is the moment to make the first of what we may call "Proud Boasts" or "P.B.s" for short:

*Orders secured in normal business by Central during the past year have been nearly 50 per cent greater than that of the next most active product division.*

You may like to ponder that one. It gives us a certain quiet satisfaction.

Central was formed in 1948 at the same time as the other present-day product divisions when the old "horizontal" organisation of the firm was "repolarised"—so to speak—to the "vertical".

We are great believers in tradition but we have no wish to make debatable claims. Since all divisions have their roots in a common stock (or, to take the metaphor a step further, all divisions are suckers from the same point of a common root), all pre-'48 history belongs strictly speaking to M.W.T. as a whole rather than to any individual division. There's no harm, however, to our mind, in pointing out, by way of introducing you to marine activities which are "our first love", that M.W.T.,



*The East Goodwin Lightship was the first lightvessel ever to be fitted with wireless, in 1898. A Marconi radion beacon and radio telephone were added to the equipment of the present vessel during the doodle-bug bombing of 1944. Later she was used in the invasion of Europe, off the Dutch Coast*

*"Picture Post" Library*

fitted wireless to the East Goodwins Lighthouse way back at the beginning of 1898, before, you might say, the firm had got all its milk teeth—long before Russia invented television (!) or Blériot, for that matter, flew the Channel. We need hardly remind you, of course, that saving life at sea was the original inspiration of Marconi's youthful researches, and this ideal was one that he cherished all his life.

So much, then, for family heirlooms.

Radio-beacons, for lighthouses and lightships or on their own, come, as you'll have noticed, under that widish umbrella we call "Marine". And here's where we make "P.B." number 2.

*All Trinity House, Northern Lighthouse Board, and Irish Lighthouse Board "Marker" and "Approach" radio-beacons are Marconi-made and, for the most part, Marconi-installed. That is to*

say, all wireless-fitted lighthouses and lightships in English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish waters.

At this moment, as you probably know or should if you don't, we are up to our necks preparing to fit or refit more than forty U.K. lighthouses and lightships with new radio beacons to bring them into line with the latest reorganisation scheme for navigational aids in European waters agreed on at the international conference held in Paris in April 1951. The entire scheme is due to start working by August 1953.

As a matter of interest, an M.W.T. employee who is called on to work in lightships or in certain isolated lighthouses gets a special "Rock Allowance". Any volunteers? It's apt to be monotonous lonely work—and bad weather can cut you off for days or even weeks. One of our engineers once got down to



*One of the lighthouses already fitted with a Marconi radio beacon is Round Island, Scilly Isles. The mast can be seen on the right. Round Island is one of those rocky masses to which there is no approach except by bosun's chair. Our picture was taken on a fine day, but Atlantic gales can make Round Island a very different place*

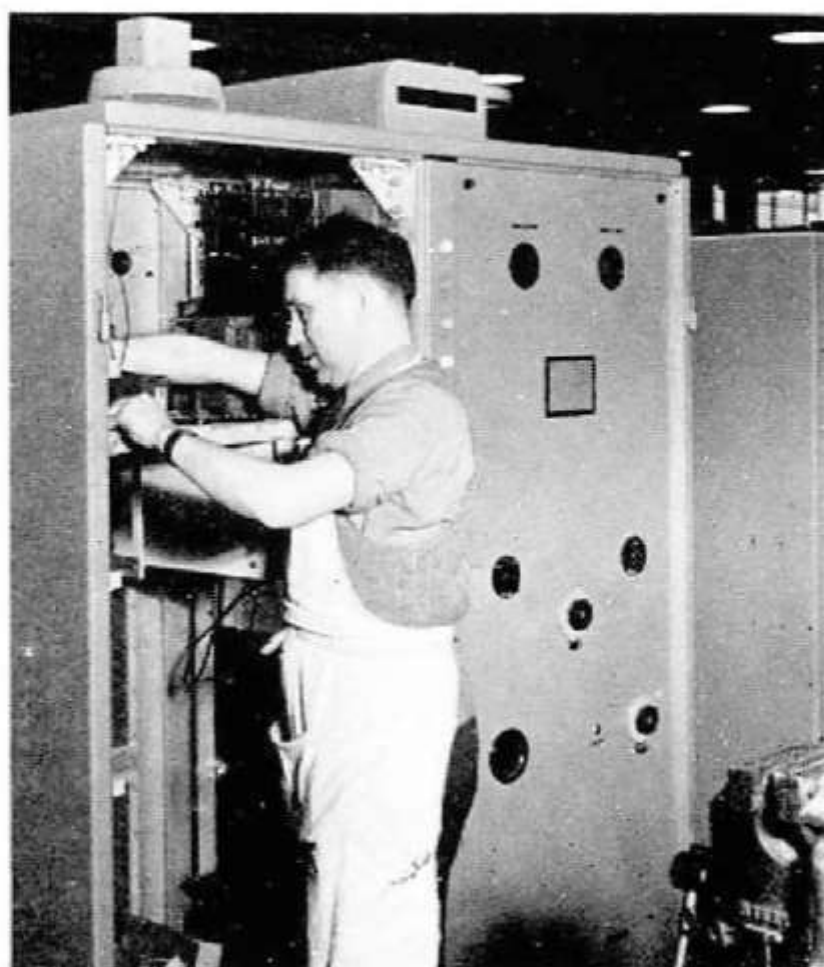
*Aerofilms Ltd. photograph*

smoking coffee grains with a lighthouse keeper (or so he said).

Home waters are not, of course, by any means our only parish. Recently we have sent automatic radio beacons to that lonely place South Georgia in the Antarctic and are preparing a special installation for Troughton Isle, an uninhabited tropical island off the north-west coast of Australia. One of our engineers spent last Christmas in solitary state (barring goats) on an island at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Navies . . . fighting ships. Well, this is a slightly tricky subject as "security" comes into it and you know what "security" is or can be. However, between you and us and the gatepost, we are at this moment fitting the radio into three British-built destroyers for Venezuela which are now coming off the stocks. We do a good deal of work of

*In Section 17, New Street, a Beacon transmitter for a lighthouse such as that on Round Island is being finally wired by Jack Cranfield*



this kind which you must take our word for. Warships, of course, are not built on the scale they used to be, nor is there the scope for business there once was. Nevertheless it means a very great deal of work. We have to and do keep in very close touch with the great shipbuilders like Vickers, Thornycroft and Yarrow, to ensure that if somebody *does* happen to order a battlewagon . . . Warships, in other words, are not ordered every day or even every week, but it's part of our job to see that we don't miss chances by being overlooked.

Another small line that comes under this heading is supplying and fitting mobile VHF for harbour, river and coastal work—customs and pilot cutters, river launches, Trinity House craft and so on.

And before we leave Marine, we must, of course, make a special point of "Our

Best Customer". Clear all sea-roads, in fact, for "P.B." No. 3.

*We sell to M.I.M.C. Co. all equipment they need for their world-wide service to the merchant shipping of all nations; and we feel entitled to take no small pride in the part we play in enabling them to live up to their motto of "Service, Security and Progress". Occasionally, however, where the supply and installation of special equipment is concerned, as in the case of the Gothic last year when she was chosen to take the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh to Australia, we even fit a merchant ship; but then, for the purposes of that voyage, the Gothic became actually a unit of the Royal Navy. The installation and maintenance and so on of radio in merchant ships is, of course, the M.I.M.C. Co.'s exclusive preserve. End of Part I.*

## DEATH OF MR. ANDREW GRAY

MR. ANDREW GRAY, one of the earliest wireless pioneers and a personal friend and assistant of the late Marchese Marconi, died on 22 March at the age of eighty.

C. S. Franklin writes:

"I am one of a large number of people who will wish to pay him tribute.



"I first met Andrew Gray in 1901. I was acting telegraphist on the Cunard ship *Umbria*, and he was returning from Hawaii where he had been organising the first wireless communications between the islands. I have always been grateful to him for giving me my first opportunity to do experimental work at Niton, the Lizard and Chelmsford. Later, when I was more directly associated with the Marchese Marconi, I was always conscious of his help and encouragement.

"Andrew Gray is remembered for his early work on tuning, for his organisation of the first ship telegraph communications, and for his work on the engineering side, particularly perhaps for the Gray Mast.

"At times he had a rather frank and abrupt manner which could be disconcerting to those with a poor conscience, but he was very well liked and—perhaps most remarkable of all—I never heard anybody speak disrespectfully of him."